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Foreign Policy Put On Line

Publisher's Impressions Of Session With Top Officials

News media representatives from throughout the United States were invited to a "foreign policy briefing conference" conducted in Washington April 24-25 by the Department of State. Paul R. Eyerly, co-publisher and managing editor, reports on the sessions.

The experience of rubbing elbows with the nation's top commentators and editors was indeed a rewarding one. But by far the most impressionable aspect of the two days was the magnitude and thoroughness with which world-wide problems were discussed.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk previously stated the conference was arranged as part of his department's efforts to see that the American people "have access to basic facts about, and fundamental understanding of our foreign policy and will give us an opportunity to go into many matters about which the news representatives might have some questions."

The Department of State sent its first team to the rostrum, an im-

pressive array that included President Kennedy and Secretary Rusk to attain the objective. To supplement were Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles, Director of United States Information Agency Edward R. Murrow, plus an impressive array of deputy Under Secretaries of States, and Deputy Assistant Secretaries of State.

Proceeding were a matter of record but participants were amply warned not to credit comments to any one individual or any one agency. The "ground rules" confined reporting for background purposes.

It is safe to assume the Sino-Russian bloc have had access to everything discussed, but the approach undoubtedly put the speaker at ease to know he could not be quoted directly; particularly with respect to the question and answer time allotted for each subject.

Cuba Hottest 'Hot Spot'

There are many hot spots around the world today, but the one which is closest to us both geographically and as individuals is Cuba.

Although this subject was among the last discussed on the two-day agenda, our conference reporting will start off with that topic.

Conflicting reports followed the ill-fated invasion by anti-Castro forces. Our Central Intelligence Agency was charged with incompetence. A lot of us wondered how Castro's hold could have been so underestimated.

Then, President Kennedy assumed full responsibility and named George Maxwell Taylor, former chief of staff, to head an inquiry into the Cuban fiasco.

From the "briefing" we were told "there would be no more assumptions" which could indicate questioning about intelligence reports reaching this country.

Yet, we were told Castro's strength and weaknesses had been analyzed. A "watch" committee is constantly evaluating all critical areas around the world. The assurance was given this country has accurate information on the Cuban army, its force and general temper of the people.

It was apparent the final decision to move with the anti-Castro forces rested with those "most involved."

National Security

Discussion centered on the dual role of the press—its responsibility of keeping the public informed of grave matters and that of preserving national security.

On this score we were told, and it is quite obvious, the free world is at a disadvantage. Russia and Red China move with complete secrecy. This does not hold true in a free society.

Our Central Intelligence Agency was established in 1947, an outgrowth of World War II. The establishing act exempts the agency from the provisions of any law requiring publication or disclosure of organizations, functions, names, official titles, salaries or numbers of personnel employees.

This kind of freedom from public scrutiny has given CIA both its strength and its occasional weaknesses.

The magnitude of the task facing

CIA is indicated by the fact intelligence is required in scores of countries and nations.

Failure of intelligence has left its mark on countries. Pearl Harbor was cited as an example.

The CIA is concerned with immediate and creeping crises.

We were led to believe our Central Intelligence Agency has been and is an effective instrument. Its responsibility staggers the imagination.

There is no discounting the fact Administration is cognizant of the fact American prestige was damaged as the result of the Cuban mess. Our very survival is at stake.

But the biggest question of all was not asked nor answered—where do we go from here with respect to Cuba. And for obvious reasons.

Nevertheless, while the affair was a failure, it was a success is inevitable.

(To Be Continued)

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